



Engineering Freedom



Issue 2

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Newsletter of the 30th Engineer Brigade

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February 1, 2005



Brig. Gen. Thomas Lawing and Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Graves unfurl the 30th Engineer Brigade flag.

30th Engineer Brigade Assumes Iraq Mission

Col. Robert G. Braddock, commander of the 372nd Engineer Group, U.S. Army Reserve, joined Brig. Gen. Thomas C. Lawing, commander of the 30th Engineer Brigade (Theater Army), January 21 to transfer authority for the engineering mission in northern Iraq. The 372nd and its subordinate units are returning to their homes after a year in theater. They are being replaced by the Charlotte-based 30th Engineer Brigade (TA), North Carolina National Guard, and supporting Reserve, National Guard, and active duty Army and Air Force units from Pennsylvania, Michigan, Louisiana, Texas, Washington state, and Germany.

The 30th Brigade will take on engineering tasks throughout the country—missions ranging from bridging and paving operations, building construction and renovation, and well-drilling to managing civil-military operations designed to restore Iraqi infrastructure and provide humanitarian assistance and foster economic development.

The 30th comes to the task well-trained and equipped. Training at the home station began as soon as the alert order was received. Annual training at Ft. Bragg focused on specific tasks related to Operation Iraqi Freedom. Once at the mobilization station (Ft. Bragg), training intensified until the unit was validated as deployment-ready. Meantime, the S-4 (logistics) section ordered, readied, and transported tons of material, vehicles, and equipment.

Personal and family preparation has been a long, challenging process for the soldiers too. Soldier Readiness Processing (SRP) is one of the first steps on the road to mobilization and deployment. The Judge Advocate General (JAG) office plays a big role in this. "We walk soldiers through the process: (making) family care plans, wills, power of attorney, trusts for kids, etc.," said Sergeant First Class Jamie Helms from Waxhaw, N.C., Senior Legal Non-commissioned Officer-in Charge (NCOIC).

For some of the soldiers who have been around a while, this is the second or third deployment. Although it's never easy, loved ones know what to expect and can usually adapt quickly. But there are single parents who have to make plans to ensure the children are well taken care of. Staff Sgt. Carlene Bloss of Jacksonville, N.C., arranged for her fourteen-year-old son, Anthony, to stay with her sister in Minnesota. "I phone him 5 days a week," said Staff Sergeant Bloss, who also communicates with a daily email message and three hand-written letters a week.



Kacy Davis

Every situation is different. Raleigh resident Sgt. Jeremy Davis's wife, Yoko, is from Japan. She and daughter, Kacy, three years old, "are in Japan with (her) family in Hiroshima," said Sergeant Davis. Unlike soldiers whose families are in the States (eight hours behind), Davis has to remember "Japan is 6 hours ahead. The best time for me to call is 2 p.m., when it's 8 p.m. in Japan and I can talk to Kacy before she goes to bed."

Deployment for single soldiers, like Spc. Stacy Strayhorn, an administrative specialist from Statesville, N.C., didn't involve such complications. "It's easier from that aspect," said Specialist Strayhorn.

Spc. Ebony Jones, Raleigh, is a Political Science student at North Carolina State University ("Go Wolfpack"). "I took a leave of absence from school, so I can resume (my studies) where I left off," said Specialist Jones. Here, Jones, is responsible for, among other things, distributing the

mail. "It's very important for morale." So keep those cards and letters coming in!

Besides support from home, training, personal commitment to the mission, and good leadership have kept morale high during this transition. Captain Timothy Gerald, headquarters company commander, said, "the soldiers have taken the mission to heart. They realize there's a reason for all the training we've been doing. Now they're putting their skills to work."

Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Gus Thomas agrees. Based on interaction with the troops, "morale is good. They're getting acclimated to this environment and getting used to their jobs."

"The soldiers have adapted well, transitioning from a training environment to a real-world mission in a combat zone," added First Sergeant Todd Bitler.

Brigade Commander Thomas Lawing said, "Today's ceremony is symbolic of one leg in a relay race. The baton being passed in this relay race is the control of engineering operations in this Area of Operations. To the soldiers of the 372nd, you have done your mission and been very successful... To the soldiers of the 30th Engineer Brigade, I will only say two brief things: now we have the baton and the future is ours to make. Engineering Freedom!"



Spc. Stacy Strayhorn



Present arms!

"...the future is ours to make..."

--Brig. Gen. Thomas Lawing,
commander



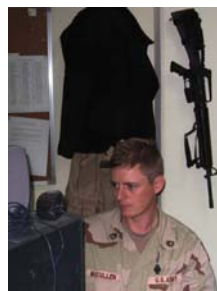
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Commander, 30th Engineer Brigade:
Brig. Gen. Thomas Lawing
Brigade Command Sergeant Major:
Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Graves

Moving in...



Setting up...



Headin' out...



Away team...



Around camp...

